III

NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

CONTENTS

1. Noble Truth of Path leading to Cessation of Suffering

"There are two extremes namely: Indulgence in **Sensual Pleasure** which is base, common, vulgar, unholy and unprofitable; or **Self-mortification** which is painful, unholy and unprofitable. Both these two extremes, the Perfect One has avoided, and has found out the **Middle Path,** which makes one both to see and to know, which leads to peace, to discernment, to Enlightenment, to ***Nibbana.*** It is the **Noble Eightfold Path,** the way that leads to the cessation of suffering, namely:"

(a) Right View	*Samma-ditthi*	Wisdom
(b) Right Thought	*Samma-sankappa*	Wisdom
(c) Right Speech	*Samma-vaca*	Morality
(d) Right Action	*Samma-kammanta*	Morality
(e) Right Livelihood	*Samma-ajiva*	Morality
(f) Right Effort	*Samma-vayama*	Concentration
(g) Right Mindfulness	*Samma-sati*	Concentration
(h) Right Concentration	*Samma-samadhi*	Concentration

2. Right View

a) Right understanding of the **Ten Subjects** (*dasavatthu)* as taught by the Buddha, namely:

i There is moral significance in **almsgiving.**
ii There is moral significance in **large offerings**.
iii There is moral significance in **small gifts**.
iv There is the result of well-done and ill-done ***kamma*** **(action).**
v There is moral significance in what is done to one's **mother**.
vi There is moral significance in what is done to one's **father.**
vii There are beings of **instantaneous rebirth.**
viii There is **this world.**
ix There is **another world**.

- x There are in this world sages and recluses of right attainment, of right practice, who having realized by their own **super knowledge** the truth regarding this world and other worlds, make it known to others.

b) Right view of the **Law of *Kamma*** i.e. all beings are owners of their *Kamma* and will reap the corresponding results.

c) Right view through penetration into the **true nature** of mental and physical processes (*nama-rupa pariccheda nana*).

d) Right view through penetration into the **root cause** and other causes of the physical and mental processes leading to realization of the **cause and effect** relationship (*paccaya pariggaha nana*).

e) Right view by realization of **Insight Wisdom** (***Vipassana Nana*).** There are 10 stages of this mundane Insight Wisdom beginning from the Knowledge of Comprehension (***Sammasana Nana***) to the Knowledge of Conformity (***Anuloma Nana***)

f) Right View by attainment of the **Four Stages of Sainthood (*Ariya Magga Nana*)**

Now, in understanding wrong view as wrong and right view as right, one practises **'Right View'.** In making efforts to overcome wrong view and arouse right view, one practises **'Right Effort'.** In overcoming wrong view with attentive mind and dwelling with attentive mind in the possession of right view, one practises **'Right Mindfulness'.** Hence, there are 3 Factors that accompany and follow right view, namely: Right View, Right Effort and Right Mindfulness.

3. Right Thought

a) Thought free from lust ***(Nekkhama**-sankappa*)
b) Thought free from ill-will ***(Abyapada**-sankappa)*
c) Thought free from cruelty ***(Avihimsa**-sankappa)*

'Thought' here does not mean thinking or conceptualizing. It is used in the technical sense of directing the mind to the object or the **application** of the mind (consciousness & mental factors) on the object (*vitakka*).

Now, in understanding wrong thought as wrong, and right thought as right, one practises **Right View**. In making efforts to overcome evil thought and to arouse right thought, one practises **Right Effort.** In overcoming evil thoughts with attentive mind and dwelling with attentive mind in possession of right thought, one practises **Right Mindfulness**. Hence there are 3 Factors that accompany and follow Right Thought, namely: Right View, Right Effort and Right Mindfulness.

4. Right Speech

a) Refraining from **false** speech.
b) Refraining from **slanderous** speech.
c) Refraining from **harsh** words and **abusive** language.
d) Refraining from **frivolous** talk or **vain** talk.

Now, in understanding wrong speech as wrong, and right speech as right, one practises **Right View.** In making efforts to overcome evil speech and arouse right speech, one practises **Right Effort.** In overcoming wrong speech with attentive mind and dwelling in possession of right speech with attentive mind, one practises **Right Mindfulness**. Hence there are 3 Factors that accompany and follow Right Speech, namely: Right View, Right Effort and Right Mindfulness.

5. Right Action

a) Refraining from injuring or **killing** any living being.
b) Refraining from **taking what is not given**.
c) Refraining from **wrong conduct** in (sexual) pleasures, intoxicants and gambling.
- **Immoral** physical and verbal actions such as deceit, trickery, usury and ungratefulness are considered wrong speech and actions.

Now, in understanding wrong action as wrong, and right action as right, one practises **Right View.** In making efforts to overcome wrong action and arouse right action, one practises **Right Effort.** In overcoming wrong action with attentive mind and dwelling in possession of right action with attentive mind, one practises **Right Mindfulness**. Hence there are 3 Factors that accompany and follow Right Action, namely**:** Right View, Right Effort and Right Mindfulness.

6. Right Livelihood

Refraining from trading in the 5 kinds of merchandise, namely:
(a) Weapons
(b) Living beings
(c) Meat
(d) Intoxicants
(e) Poisons

In general, one should refrain from livelihood based on **wrong conduct** to be avoided under Right Action and Right Speech.

Now, in understanding wrong livelihood as wrong, and right livelihood as right, one practises **Right View**. In making efforts to overcome wrong livelihood and to establish right livelihood, one practises **Right Effort.** In overcoming wrong livelihood with

attentive mind and dwelling in possession of right livelihood, one practises **Right Mindfulness.** Hence there are 3 Factors that accompany and follow Right Livelihood, namely: Right View, Right Effort and Right Mindfulness.

7. Right Effort

Right effort is concerned with the development of the mind. There are **Four Great Efforts**, namely: the effort to avoid, the effort to overcome, the effort to develop, and the effort to maintain.

a) **The Effort to Avoid**
Here one arouses the will to **avoid the arising of evil**, unwholesome states of mind that have not yet arisen. He makes effort, stirs up his energy, exerts his mind and strives. How? By watching over and restraining his senses, e.g., by noting seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking, at the moment of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking.

b) **The Effort to Overcome**
Here one arouses the will to **overcome the evil,** unwholesome states of mind that have already arisen. He makes effort, stirs up his energy, exerts his mind and strives. How? He does not retain any thought of greed, ill-will, delusion or any other unwholesome states that may have arisen. He abandons them, dispels them, destroys them and causes them to disappear e.g. by noting them mindfully as they arise.

c) **The Effort to Develop**
Here one rouses the will to **arouse wholesome** states of mind that have not arisen. He makes effort, stirs up his energy, exerts his mind and strives. How? He develops the 7 Factors of Enlightenment,

namely: Mindfulness (*Sati*), Investigation of physical and mental processes (*Dhammavicaya*), Energy (*Viriya*), Pleasurable Interest (*Piti*), Tranquility (*Passadhi*), Concentration (*Samadhi*) and Equanimity (*Upekkha*).

d) **<u>The Effort to Maintain</u>**
Here one rouses the will to **maintain the wholesome** states of mind that have already arisen and not allow them to disappear, but develop them to full maturity (*bhavana*). He makes effort, stirs up his energy, exerts his mind and strives. How? By applying the mind firmly on the object of concentration either in Tranquility or Insight Meditation.

These four are the Right Efforts that are explained with reference to their four functions, namely: avoiding, overcoming, developing, maintaining. But in reality, there is only one factor here **— effort.** When one tries to attain any one of the purities, the effort so exercised covers these four functions automatically.

8. Right Mindfulness

Right Mindfulness is the quality of **complete awareness** developed through the **Four Foundations of Mindfulness.** Here one dwells in contemplation of the Body, contemplation of Feeling, contemplation of the Mind and contemplation of Mind Objects: ardent, mindful and clearly comprehending, after putting away greed and hatred.

a) **<u>How does one dwell in contemplation of the Body</u>?**
Through mindfulness of Respiration, the Four Postures, Clear Comprehension, 32 Parts of the Body, the Four Elements and Meditation on Corpses. (Refer to Chapter XV, 5)

b) **<u>How does one dwell in contemplation of Feeling</u>?**
Through Mindfulness of pleasant feeling, unpleasant feeling and neutral feeling, one beholds how feelings arise; beholds how feelings pass away; beholds the arising and passing away of feelings. Thus one understands that the expression 'I feel' is only a conventional expression. One understands that in the ultimate sense, there are only feelings but no 'I' or 'Self' who experiences the feelings.

c) **<u>How does one dwell in contemplation of the Mind</u>?**
Through Mindfulness of the Mental States such as the greedy mind, angry mind, deluded mind, contracted mind, distracted mind, concentrated mind, developed mind, freed mind, and their opposing states. Thus one beholds how consciousness arises; beholds how consciousness passes away; beholds the arising and passing away of consciousness. Thus one understands that the Mind is not a permanent entity. When the greedy mind arises, there is only greedy mind but no 'I' or 'Self' who is greedy.

d) **<u>How does one dwell in contemplation of Mind Objects</u>?**

i) Through Mindfulness of Mind Objects, namely:
ii) The five mental hindrances, namely: sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, distraction and doubts.
iii) The five Aggregates of Clinging.
iv) The six Sense Bases and their Objects.
v) The seven Factors of Enlightenment.
vi) The Four Noble Truths.

Thus one beholds how mind objects arise; beholds how mind objects pass away; beholds the arising and passing away of mind objects. One understands that mind objects are impermanent, suffering and not 'Self' or 'I'. Through the application of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, one develops **Right View** by the realization of **Insight Wisdom** leading finally to the realization of the **Path & Fruition Knowledge** (*Magga Phala Nana*) and the attainment of ***Nibbana*,** the cessation of all suffering. The meditation on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness is called ***Satipatthana Vipassana*** meditation and is described in Chapter XV.

9. Right Concentration

This is **one-pointedness** of mind developed through **Tranquility** meditation by **fixed** concentration (*Jhana*) with the mind only on the meditation object, to the exclusion of all others, or the **momentary** concentration developed by **Insight** meditation through the application of the **Four Foundations of Mindfulness**. According to the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw, the mundane *jhana* concentration may be classed as the path of right concentration if it forms the basis for the development of *Vipassana* (See Explanatory **Note 1** on the Path of Right Concentration)

Right Concentration is present in all wholesome consciousness and hence is accompanied by at least Right Thought (application of mind), Right Effort and Right Mindfulness. The three factors**:** Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration form the **Concentration group** of the Eightfold Noble Path by which one penetrates into the **true nature** of mental and physical processes thereby attaining **Right View by realization of Insight Wisdom.**

10. References

1) The Noble Eightfold Path and Its Factors Explained by the Venerable Ledi Sayadaw.

2) The Word of the Buddha by the Venerable Nyanatiloka.

11. Explanatory Notes

The Path of Right Concentration (*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* by the Most Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw of Burma, pages 96-99)

According to the *Suttas*, there are four kinds of right concentration:

i) The first *jhana* consisting of five factors namely: *vitakka* – directing the mind towards an object or thinking of the meditation object; *vicara* – repeated investigation on the object which has manifested; *piti* – rapture or joy; *sukha* – happiness or pleasant feeling; *ekaggata* – one-pointedness of calm mind;
ii) After fading away of *vitakka* and *vicara*, only three factors remain – *piti*, *sukha* and *ekaggata* to form the second *jhana*.
iii) Then without *piti*, the two factors *sukha* and *ekaggata* constitute the third *jhana.*
iv) In the fourth *jhana*, *sukha* is replaced by *upekkha* (equanimity) so that *upekkha* and *ekaggata* form the two factors of the fourth *jhana.*

These 4 types of *jhanas* may be mundane (*lokiya*) *jhanas* known as *rupavacara* or supra-mundane (*lokuttara*) *jhanas* accompanied by the noble path (*magga*) consciousness. The supra-mundane *jhana* concentration is the path of noble right concentration. **The mundane *jhana* concentration may be classed as the path of right concentration if it forms the basis for the development of *Vipassana***. Based on this statement, there are certain people who say that *Vipassana* can be developed only after achieving purification of mind through attaining *jhanic* concentration and not otherwise. This is a one-sided dogmatic view.

The *Visuddhi Magga*, etc. have explicitly stated that **access concentration** in the neighbourhood of *jhana*, having the capacity to suppress the hindrances, can help attain the purification of view, thus leading to the development of *vipassana*; that by so developing, attainment can be made up to the stage of *Arahantship*; that there are many who have achieved thus. In the *Maha Satipatthana Sutta*, etc. there is very clear teaching that *Arahantship* may be achieved by contemplation of such objects as bodily postures, etc., which can only cause **access concentration** to come about.

The *Anussatithana Sutta* of *Anguttara Nikaya* states that the concentration, which develops out of recollections of the virtues of the Buddha, etc. is adequate to be used as a basic concentration for the development of higher knowledge up to the state of *Arahantship*.

These authorities state further that the innumerable people by the millions who became liberated during the course of discourses given by the Buddha were not at all skilled in *jhanas* and probably many were not equipped with *jhana* attainments. But they must have achieved purification of mind (*citta visuddhi*), because their mind then was described as "**responsive, tender, free from hindrances, exultant and pure**."

In view of such consideration, definitions given in the teachings of right concentration in terms of the four *jhanas* should be regarded as superlative method of description; the access concentration, although described as an inferior way, may also be taken as right concentration, which can accomplish the purification of mind. The said access concentration has the same characteristics of suppressing the hindrances as the first *jhana*. They are similar too in having the same five factors of *jhana*, namely: *vitakka*, *vicara*, *piti*, *sukha*, *ekaggata*. Consequently we can take it that the Buddha had included both the **proper access** and the **nominal access concentration** under the category of the first *jhana* as an inferior way of definition.

There are three kinds of *samadhi* (concentrations): **Momentary** (*khanika*), **Access** (*upacara*) and **Absorption** (*appana*). The momentary concentration mentioned here refers to the fairly calm state before access concentration is attained in the course of meditating upon tranquility meditation objects (*samatha kammathana*) and also to the *vipassana samadhi*. And of these two, the *vipassana samadhi*, having the same characteristic of suppressing the hindrances as access concentration is also called **access concentration (nominal)** as explained above. That this *vipassana* momentary concentration, when it becomes strongly developed, can keep the mind well tranquilized just like the absorption concentration, has been clearly borne out by the personal experiences of yogis practising *Satipatthana Vipassana* meditation.